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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this Department.]

ENDLESS CHAIN LETTERS

DEAR EDITOR: A friend of mine who is a nurse recently came to me to ask what one should do when they received a chain letter asking them to send a number of cancelled postage stamps to some address, and also to write a certain number of letters to their friends and make the same request of them. The letters claim that if a certain number of stamps are received some hospital will be the benefactor. I understand that some questions have been asked through your columns about this matter. I beg to inform you that should you care to do so you will find in * * * the Official Postal Guide for July * * * an official statement in regard to this matter. It is evident that many nurses are being burdened with these requests, and I assume that possibly you would be glad to clear the matter up for them.

L. L. CAMPBELL, Postmaster.

United States Post Office,
Northampton, Mass.

[This question of what to do with endless chain letters and of the value of cancelled stamps was brought up by a correspondent in the JOURNAL for January of this year. The Postal Guide, to which the Northampton postmaster so kindly refers us, states that this particular endless chain letter was started ten years ago with the request that the stamps be sent to a certain person at Mills Street, in a town in Australia. By a mistake, some branch of the chain began to send letters to a Miss Mills, The Carleton, Philadelphia. There is no Miss Mills at that address and all such letters are sent to the Dead Letter Office and destroyed. Efforts are being made by the Australian authorities to encourage correspondents to break the chain and they should have the co-operation of all who receive such letters, who can best do so by destroying the letter received. It may be said of endless chain letters in general that they are very rarely used for purposes which we should wish to aid. Twenty-five years ago, when the idea was first conceived, there were a great many in circulation for good causes, but those who started them soon found that they passed beyond their control and that they became a nuisance. We think any nurse who receives any such letter would be doing the public a service by refusing to pass it on, regardless of the threat which some of them contain, which should be enough to condemn them.—Ed.]

THE EIGHT-HOUR SYSTEM

DEAR EDITOR: In reading the August number of the JOURNAL I was sorry to see the eight-hour system mentioned again, and with such applause, by delegates and nurses present. To me such a suggestion takes away the refinement

of one of the finest, if not the finest, profession of to-day, open to ladies who desire to live a useful life, as was intended by our Creator, instead of a butterfly in the social world.

I do not wish the nursing profession to think for a moment that I believe in nurses working the way they do while in training, but the cure should lie not in the eight-hour system but in a change of hospital management. I doubt at this late day, unless we had the co-operation of all nurses, if a change could be brought about.

I should suggest, as I did a few years ago in this JOURNAL, that there be a halt to the building of so many hospitals. One large general hospital would be sufficient for any city of five hundred thousand, said hospital to have a training school large enough so that the nurses may have time to do their work leisurely and well, and when they receive mail may take the time while in the ward to read it. I do not mean by that, that they should stop in the middle of a bath to do so; but that they might have the privilege of going to some room near the ward that nurses might call their own.

There is no reason why nurses should have to work the way they do while on duty and if found resting a minute be reprimanded and sometimes very severely. I do not wish to give the impression that the wrong lies with the superintendent or the head nurse. They know what has to be done and the only way to accomplish it with the number of nurses they have is to make them work, work, work.

It would be well if the physicians and community of to-day could have one month of the same assistance as the physicians and community had before Florence Nightingale, and this brings me to a point I wish to emphasize and which I wish the public realized more,—that the profession of nursing was not brought about by the medical profession but by Florence Nightingale, and to-day the real teachers of the training school are our superintendents and their assistants, no matter how many other instructors we may have. It is the teaching and influence of these that is going to make a lasting impression on the majority of graduated nurses, and so I advocate that superintendents of nurses should have more power.

We do not make better nurses because we have given a thousand baths, or made up a few thousand beds while in training. During the first part of my training I gained the reputation of making the best bed in the hospital, and I enjoyed making them, but by the time I had finished my training I had had to make so many beds that even to this day I dislike doing it. We should have more time for study, recreation, and the reading of good literature, all of which could be done to a certain extent while on duty in the wards, by having one room set apart in each ward where nurses could go when finished with their immediate work and still be on hand for any call from their patients, and while in this room they could be under the instruction of their head nurse. I should like to suggest that our head nurses be both educators and ladies, so that on graduation day we will not only be graduate nurses but those of us who were more or less illiterate and unrefined will have learned to a certain degree the requirements and accomplishments of a lady. I fully believe if this plan or some other had been carried out from the beginning our profession would be on a much higher basis than it is to-day and nurses would not be asked to go as a maid when travelling with a patient, which is an insult to the profes-

sion, and the nurses who accept these positions are adding a greater one. On the other hand, I believe in helping out in the family household in an emergency in any way that we wish to, the suggestion of help always coming first from the nurse.

In my years of private nursing I have met all classes and sorts of people and have heard a great many remarks and, strange as it may seem, you can always make the patient or family see a remark or story that they have been told in another and a right light. Take, for instance, Dr. Richard Cabot's remark on nurses telling in their idle moments or hours about some exciting operation. If Dr. Cabot or any of us would say, when such complaints are made, "Well, don't you think it is well to know a little about the other side of life? You see, knowing these things sometimes helps us to live a more normal life ourselves, and perhaps help the community we live in and in so doing lessen these exciting operations," in nearly every case the person will take this view of the gossip and profit by it. There is always a great deal more pleasure in turning evil into good than good into evil just as pleasure in virtue far exceeds that of vice.

To go back to the suggestion of fewer hospitals and care of the sick, I should advise that some of the thousands that are used in maintaining the hospitals be spent on building sanitary tenements and homes, and in so doing we would not only have better tenements to look at, but better health and comfort for those living in them, and during sickness they could be taken as well, and I believe better, care of in their own homes under the proper conditions than in the hospital, and not cost the community as much, but while we continue to have these numerous hospitals all over the country, let us insist on more maids being employed in the hospitals.

M. J. W., R.N.

TYPHOID IN PREGNANCY

DEAR EDITOR: I want to ask through the JOURNAL for the experience of nurses who have had patients with typhoid who were pregnant women. In cases that did not abort, had blood tests been made to determine whether or not it was typhoid? I should be glad of any recent statistics on this subject.

Indiana.

E. B., R.N.

WAS SHE RIGHT?

DEAR EDITOR: In the September issue of the JOURNAL there was an admirable account of the way a nurse, on vacation, handled an emergency maternity case, in which the patient was taken with violent hemorrhage but no pain.

The promptness and skill of her treatment must excite our admiration, and it seems invidious to question it in a single point, but was she right to give whiskey? She says, "One half-ounce of whiskey was given, and instantly vomited, followed by a moment of complete unconsciousness."

Would not the whiskey have been liable to increase the hemorrhage by relaxing the walls of the arteries? I have been taught that it should never be given in any case of hemorrhage, nor any other form of alcohol, and that it is especially contra-indicated in confinement cases because it tends to increase the difficulty of delivery. One of the leading obstetricians and gynecological surgeons of this city warned me against it most strongly, saying that he had known